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Memorandum for:

These talking points on the Turkish-Syrian Relations were prepared for the D/DCI at the request of the NIO for Near East and South Asia.

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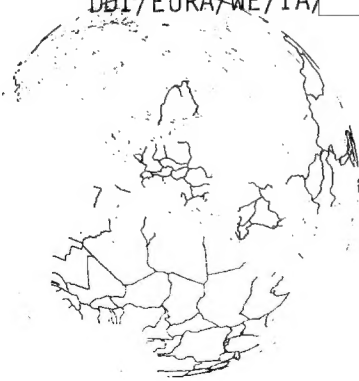
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19 September 1983

Turkey: Talking Points for the D/DCI

Subject: Turkish-Syrian Relations

1. Turkey's relations with Syria have long been strained by mutual distrust, territorial disputes, and differing viewpoints on global and regional politics. Recently, Ankara has charged the Syrians with training, supporting, and harboring anti-Turkish terrorists.

-- Turkish Foreign Minister Turkmen visited Damascus in March to urge the Syrians to cease supporting the terrorists, and he reportedly received assurances on this score. Turkmen recently asserted publicly, however, that the Syrians are not keeping their word.

-- [redacted] President Evren believes that Turkey sooner or later will have to go to war with Syria [redacted] has ordered the Turkish General Staff to do some long-range contingency planning along these lines. [redacted]

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2. The Turks are not, however, well-placed to do much more than think about a major military action against their neighbor.

-- With a peacetime strength of about 33,000 men, the Second Army, which has responsibility for the defense of the border with Syria, is the smallest and least capable of Turkey's regional forces. Although it has recently been given a higher priority, the Second Army remains poorly equipped and undermanned. One armored, two mechanized, and two infantry brigades could be reinforced in an emergency by three "mobile brigades" of the Jandarma -- a cross between a national guard and a national police force. Three of the Second Army's brigades and two Jandarma units are normally stationed near the Syrian border. Elements of the Jandarma units, however, were moved recently to the Iraqi border region out of concern for the security of that area.

-- Three Turkish military air bases are located within 200 kilometers of the border. Combat air resources in the region consist of five attack squadrons (three F4E and two F-100) and one tactical reconnaissance squadron. No air defense aircraft are stationed in eastern Turkey.

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3. Beefing these forces up to a point where Ankara could mount a credible military threat to Syria would entail basic shifts in Turkey's order of battle.

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- Most of Turkey's combat-ready units are committed to NATO to defend against Soviet attacks in Thrace and eastern Turkey.
- The rest are committed to western Turkey and the Aegean area, where Turkey and Greece continue to eye each other warily.
- Even if a decision were made to move some additional units to the Syrian border, long distances, rough terrain, and poor transport facilities would make the job difficult. [REDACTED]

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4. All this suggests to us that the Turks might shy away from posturing on the border for fear their bluff might be called. We believe they might, however, be inclined to undertake limited "police-type" incursions into Syria against terrorist training camps if they were persuaded that the chances of a Syrian counter thrust were minimized by other demands on the Syrians' attention.

- [REDACTED] during the summer that Ankara was thinking about conducting limited security operations in the border areas. In fact, the Turks did undertake just such an operation in late May and early June in northern Iraq -- albeit with Baghdad's permission.
- Although the Turks have said they would want permission from Damascus before making such a move, we believe the poor state of Turkish-Syrian relations could overcome Ankara's inhibitions. Despite this predisposition, if Washington were to urge the Turks to conduct such operations, Ankara would want firm advance guarantees of US support.

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